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USDA Tests Biobased Cafeteria Products at the Whitten Cafeteria. On August 12, 2005, USDA began a pilot test of biobased food service products in one of the cafeteria's in its headquarters complex.

On August 12, 2005, U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary Chuck Conner and Assistant Secretary for Administration Michael James Harrison hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony at USDA's Whitten Building cafeteria to kick off USDA's first official biobased products pilot to implement the 2002 Farm Bill. The pilot will be conducted through September 9, 2005, and will result in testing the practicality of using biobased food service products such as plates, bowls, cups and cutlery in carrying out the daily responsibilities of the Whitten Building basement cafeteria.

All of the items that will be used in the pilot are biodegradable and will be composted along with excess food products by the Agricultural Research Service in a partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at USDA's composting facility in Beltsville, MD. Once composted, this new by-product will be used to enrich the soil at USDA plant testing facilities, which will result in a cost savings for that activity.

In addition, Assistant Secretary Harrison announced the creation of the "USDA Center for Biobased Product Leadership". The new center will be located at USDA's headquarters in Washington D.C. and will provide information and guidance to other federal agencies, private industry and private citizens respecting the biobased procurement program mandated under the 2002 farm Bill.